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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 005927

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAL](#) [EG](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: RAFAH BORDER UPDATE

Classified By: Minister Counselor for Economic and Political Affairs
William R. Stewart for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) An Egyptian military official in the Liaison Agency with International Organizations (LAWIO) told poloff on September 20 that LAWIO is working closely with Israeli liaison counterparts, including General Udi Dekel, to coordinate the opening of the Rafah terminal in the near future. He said that during a meeting on September 12 in Sinai, Egyptian and Israeli liaison agreed to coordinate with their governments to schedule a Rafah opening to allow:

- Palestinians currently in Egypt to return to Gaza;
- an undetermined but large number of Palestinians to enter Egypt en route to Saudi Arabia for Umrah;
- Palestinian students to enter Egypt to return to school;
- Palestinian humanitarian/medical cases to enter Egypt for treatment.

¶2. (C) According to LAWIO, Egypt is ready to open Rafah, but the GOI has not yet agreed. The LAWIO officer said that he had spoken to General Dekel three times since September 12 asking him to press this issue with Israeli officials. The officer said he stressed the urgency of allowing students and Umrah travelers to enter Egypt. Dekel pledged to follow up. The LAWIO officer said he heard "unofficially" that the GOI may agree to open the terminal on September 24.

¶3. (C) The LAWIO officer confirmed that current GOE procedures prevent Palestinians wanting to return to Gaza from entering Sinai until the border opening has been confirmed. (Note: The GOE previously allowed Palestinians to stay in the northern Sinai town of Al Arish while waiting for Rafah terminal to open. Egypt ended this practice after an incident in which armed Palestinians forced their way into the Egyptian terminal to allow Palestinians to exit Egypt and enter Gaza. In that episode, four Ministry of Interior representatives, including one officer, were wounded by Palestinian militants. End note). He also said that the police, currently at their posts in Al Arish, are ready to deploy to the border to support the Egyptian Border Guard Forces (BGF) in ensuring that the crossings are orderly. LAWIO Chief Major General Nagy reported separately that the BGF continue their focus on cross-border smuggling. The forces uncovered 1.5 tons of TNT during the week of September

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